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SECRET HISTORY
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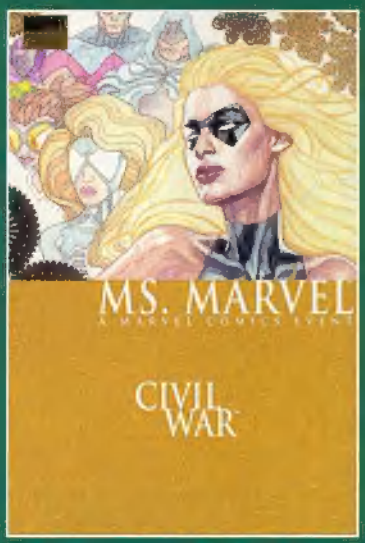

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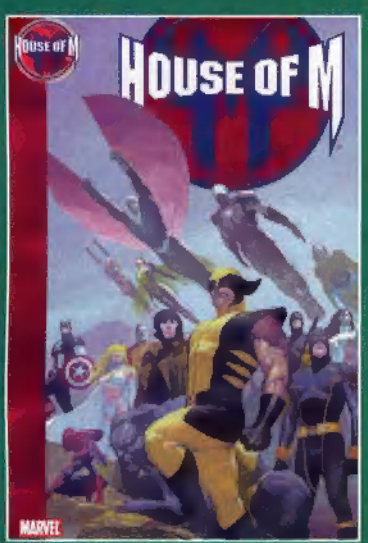

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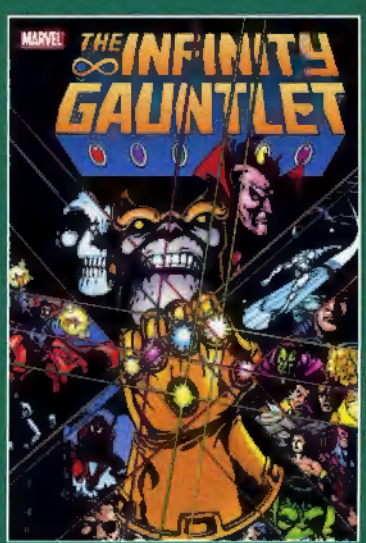

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NEW AVENGERS: ILLUMINATI #1

NEW AVENGERS: ILLUMINATI #1
INKS

YEARS AGO...
(TRANSLATED FROM THE SFDSDCF DIALECT OF THE SKRULL LANGUAGE)

THE WAR WITH THE KREE IS OVER.

OUR ENTIRE FLEET WAS PARALYZED BY A SINGLE MAN FROM THIS BACKWARD PLANET EARTH...

A SINGLE *HUMAN!*

AND I WANT AN EXPLANATION AS TO *HOW THIS DISGUSTING THING IS POSSIBLE!*

WE ARE, BY ANY AND ALL DEFINITIONS, THE *SUPERIOR* RACE!

IT HAS BEEN FORETOLD THAT THE EARTH PLANET IS OURS TO TAKE.

HAS IT NOT BEEN FORETOLD OF THE SKRULLWORLD'S EVENTUAL DESTRUCTION AND OUR *TAKING* OF THE EARTH PLANET?

SO *HOW* IS IT THAT WE *DO NOT HAVE* THE EARTH PLANET?

HOW DOES IT COME TO PASS THAT WE, A TRUE WARRIOR RACE, HAVE BEEN BROUGHT A DEFEAT *LARGER* THAN *ANY* OUR PEOPLE HAVE EVER KNOWN BEFORE?

YOUR HIGHNESS, THE SKRULL MILITARY WAS NOT PREPARED FOR THE KREE ARMY *AND* THE INTERVENTION OF--

TO FINISH THAT THOUGHT WILL BE YOUR DEATH!

I BEG YOU...YOUR-YOUR HOLIEST OF ALL HOLIES...

THE EARTH HAS AN UNUSUALLY *HIGH* NUMBER OF UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS.

A POPULATION OF WHAT THEY CALL HOMO SUPERIOR--

--WHAT *WE* WOULD CALL GENETIC ATROCITIES THAT WOULD BE KILLED AT BIRTH...

ON THAT DISGUSTING PLANET THEY *LIVE* AND *FUNCTION* IN THEIR DIFFERENT SOCIETIES.

THIS GROUP, THE *MUTANTS*, GROWS BY THE *THOUSANDS* EVERY YEAR.

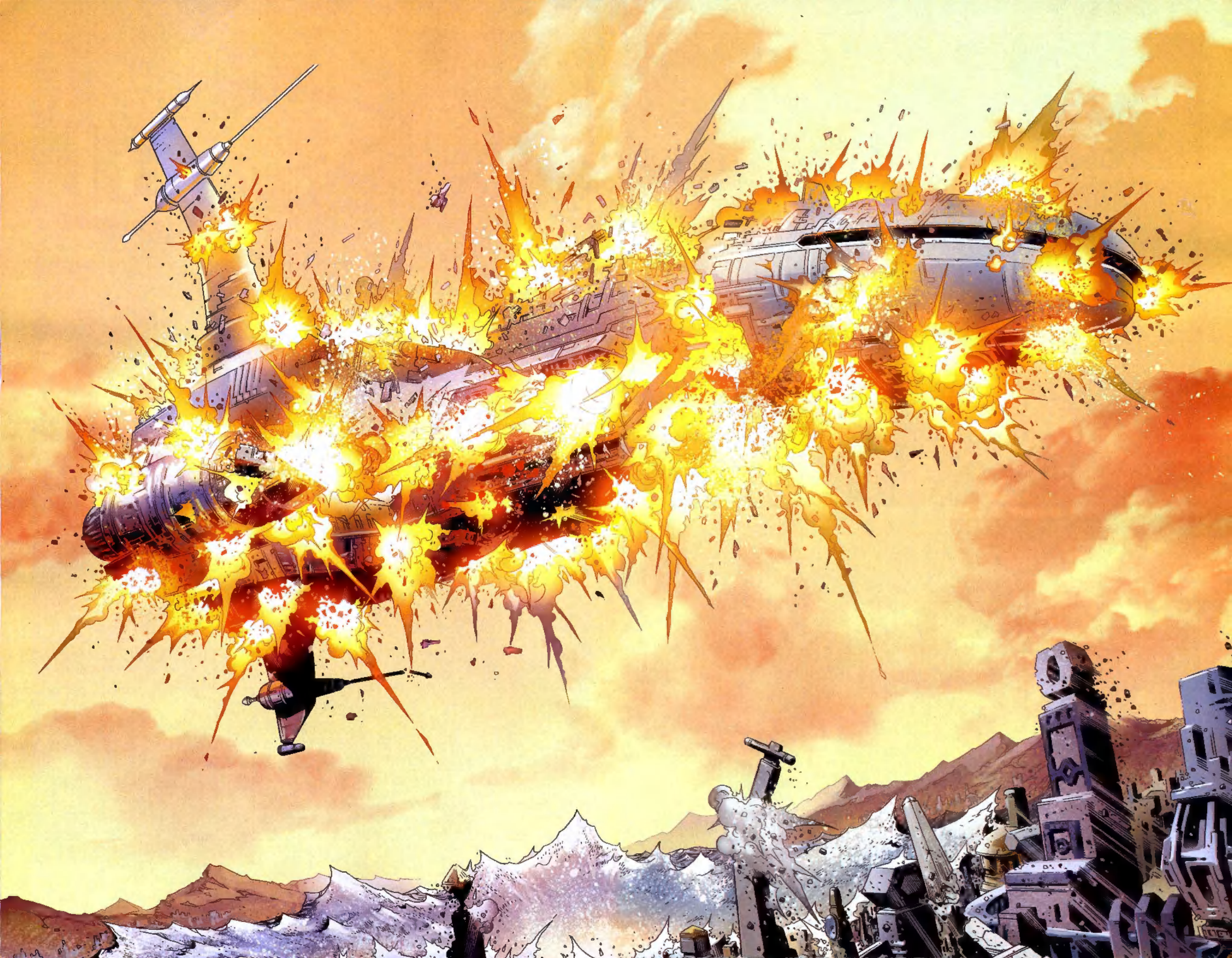
WITH THIS SITUATION *ESCALATING*, ALONG WITH THE SO-CALLED SUPER HEROES, *AND* THE COMPETITION WITH THE KREE...

...WE SIMPLY *CANNOT* EXPECT TO CONQUER THE EARTH PLANET WITH A FRONTAL ATTACK--

YOUR HIGHNESS...

...MY NAME IS DOCTOR REED RICHARDS OF THE EARTH'S FANTASTIC FOUR.
AND I AM IRON MAN OF THE AVENGERS.
I AM PRINCE NAMOR, RULER OF ATLANTIS.
I AM DOCTOR STEPHEN STRANGE, MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS.
AND I AM PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER.
I AM ONE OF THE "GENETIC ATROCITIES" YOU WERE JUST REFERRING TO...
BESIDE ME IS BLACK BOLT, RULER OF THE INHUMANS.

WE CAME HERE TO TELL YOU THAT WE WILL NOT TOLERATE ANOTHER INVASION ATTEMPT ON THE EARTH.
IF YOU EVEN SO MUCH AS APPROACH EARTH SPACE, IT WILL FORCE US TO GATHER AND COME AT YOU WITH MANPOWER YOU COULD NOT IMAGINE.
THIS IS A WARNING.
YOU COME AT US EVER AGAIN, AND WE'LL COME AT YOU.
HOW DARE YOU COME HERE AND THREATEN ME IN MY OWN HOME?
THE EARTH PLANET IS OURS!
I'M TELLING YOU, IT IS NOT AND NEVER WILL BE.
DO WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER?
EVERY SINGLE MEMBER OF YOUR SPECIES WILL DIE UNDER MY RULE.
AND YOUR FAMILIES...WILL BE THE FIRST BLOOD I TASTE.
WELL, OBVIOUSLY, I'M SORRY TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT.
DOCTOR...
I'M READY.
BLACK BOLT, WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY?



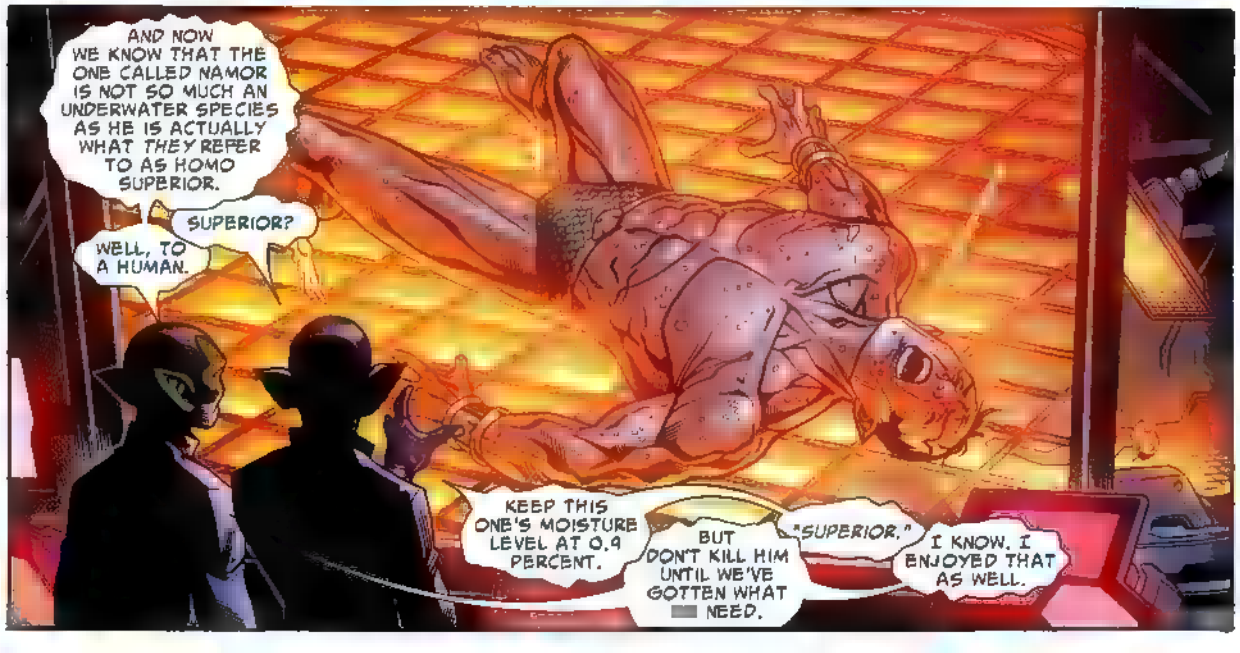
FAWWWWOOPH!
HOLD ON!

HA-HAAA!
LOOK AT THAT!
REJOICE. THAT WAS PERFECTLY EXECUTED.
WE DID WHAT WE HAD TO DO...
WE DON'T HAVE TO ENJOY IT.
WHY NOT? THEY ALREADY TRIED TO KILL US AND TAKE OUR PLANET, AND THEY WERE PLANNING TO TRY IT AGAIN.
WE DID NOT START THIS.
WELL, I'LL ENJOY IT ENOUGH FOR ALL OF US, THEN.
WHAT?
SEAT BELTS!
WHAT WAS THAT?!

I THOUGHT YOU SAID THIS SHIP WAS CLOAKED!
I THOUGHT IT WAS! DOCTOR?
AGH!
I'M DOING WHAT I CAN!
I AM TRYING TO GET INSIDE THE PILOTS' MINDS AND FORCE THEM TO BREAK OFF THE ATTACK.
I JUST NEED A FEW MORE--
BOOM
DAMN!

TELL THE KING THAT TODAY IS A GOOD DAY FOR THE EMPIRE AFTER ALL.

OUR EARLY STUDIES AND SAMPLINGS OF THE EARTH PRISONERS ARE VERY INTERESTING.
THIS GROUP OF EARTH "HEROES" IS A GENEROUS GATHERING OF UNIQUE GENETIC SPECIMENS FOR US TO STUDY AND DISSECT.
WE FINALLY GET TO TEST OUR THEORIES ON REED RICHARDS' BIOLOGY.
INDEED.
I AM CURIOUS TO SEE JUST WHAT THE UPPER LIMITS OF HIS EXTENSION ARE...


AND NOW WE KNOW THAT THE ONE CALLED NAMOR IS NOT SO MUCH AN UNDERWATER SPECIES AS HE IS ACTUALLY WHAT *THEY* REFER TO AS HOMO SUPERIOR.
SUPERIOR?
WELL, TO A HUMAN.
KEEP THIS ONE'S MOISTURE LEVEL AT 0.9 PERCENT.
BUT DON'T KILL HIM UNTIL WE'VE GOTTEN WHAT [redacted] NEED.
"SUPERIOR."
I KNOW. I ENJOYED THAT AS WELL.

THIS INHUMAN "BLACK BOLT'S" VOCAL CORDS HAVE BEEN IMMOBILIZED.
DID YOU TEAR THEM OUT?
NO.
WE HAVE YET TO DETERMINE HOW HE GENERATES SUCH A DESTRUCTIVE FORCE FROM SOUND WAVES.
TEARING THEM OUT WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH COULD DESTROY THE ENTIRE CITY-STATE.
THESE INHUMANS. THESE KREE-SPAWN. HAVE YOU READ ABOUT THEIR TERRIGEN MISTS?
IT'S SO PERVERSE.
HIS DEATH WILL ■ LOVELY.
I'VE INVITED MY FAMILY.

NOW THIS MUTANT HAS PROVED EASIEST TO EXPLORE.
YES.
SINCE WE KNOW THE ORIGIN OF HIS POWERS IS THE MUTANT GENOME--
--BREAKING DOWN HIS DNA BEFORE WE DISSECT HIM IS NO PROBLEM AT ALL.

BUT THIS--THIS SORCERER--
THE MAGICIAN.
THIS CONFOUNDS US. ■ HAD TO CALL ■ THE PRIESTS FROM THE VOYCO ISLANDS. THEY ARE ON THEIR WAY.
THEN WE'LL OPEN HIM UP.
OH YES, RIGHT AFTER.

THE AVENGER IRON MAN--
HE IS JUST A FRAGILE, FLACCID HUMAN BEING WHO HAS ENCASED HIMSELF IN A RATHER PRIMITIVE ROBOTIC ARMOR.
WHILE ADVANCED BY HIS OWN CIVILIZATION'S STANDARDS--
--IT IS NOTHING OF CONCERN NOW THAT IT'S BEEN DISMANTLED.
IT'S TO GO ■ THE ROYAL TROPHY ROOM.
THE ONLY INTERESTING ASPECT IS THAT THIS ARMOR WAS KEEPING STARK'S HEART VALVES WORKING.

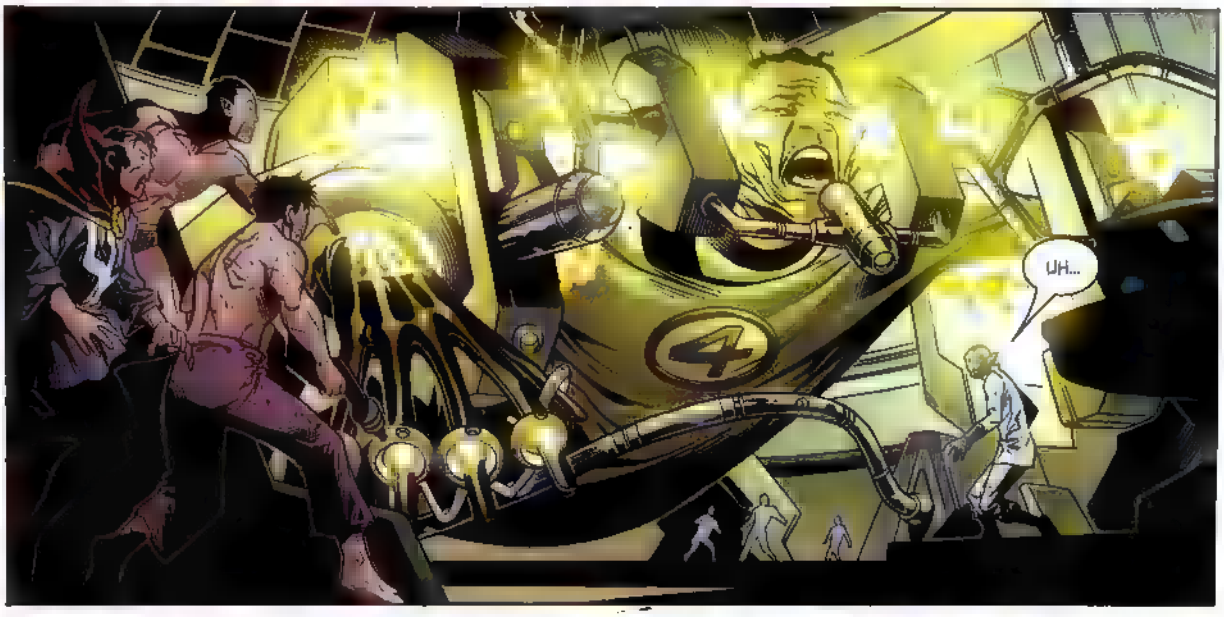
"WE'LL SEE HOW LONG HE SURVIVES WITHOUT IT."
"THAT WILL BE FUN."
UNHHH... OKAY...
NEED TO BREATHE AND...
...JUST NEED TO FOCUS.
BOOM
BOOM
AAGGHH!
STOP THEM!
ZZAATOOOM

IRON [redacted], IT SEEMS THOU ART IN NEED OF SOME FRIENDLY ASSISTANCE!
WE'RE HERE TO RESCUE YOU, PAL.
GET UP! WE GOT TO GO...NOW!
REALLY? WOW.
YOU KNOW...
...THE PROBLEM WITH THE SKRULL EMPIRE IS, YOU SEEM TO TAKE GREAT PLEASURE IN ALWAYS UNDERESTIMATING YOUR OPPONENTS.
IN OTHER WORDS, HOW DUMB DO YOU THINK I AM?
I TOLD YOU THIS WAS A WASTE OF TIME!
THIS IS NOT THE WAY TO GET INFORMATION FROM HIM. WE HAVE TO DISSECT HIM, AND THAT'S--
NO. NO. WAIT.
THIS IS INTERESTING.
WHY--?
BECAUSE HE--HE DOESN'T EXPECT HIS TEAMMATES TO COME RESCUE HIM.
NO ONE KNOWS THEY CAME HERE.
NO ONE'S COMING TO RESCUE HIM!
CRACK
AGH!

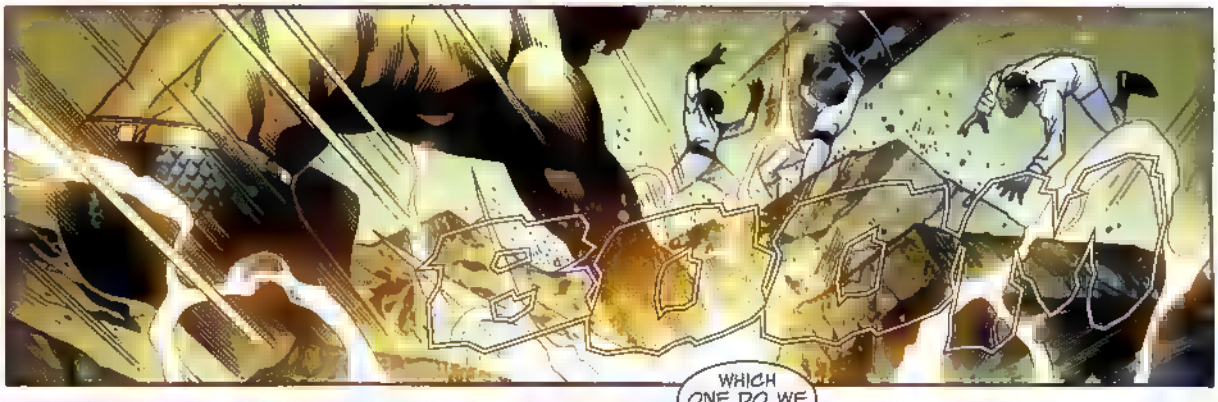
AAAGGH!
CRUNCH
SMAK
GARRGGH!!
FLIMP
AAAGGH!
THANKS FOR THE COMBAT TRAINING, CAP.

SCHOOM
SCHOOM
SCHOOM
AAGGH! AGGHH!
YEARRGGHH!
NOOO!
YOU OKAY, CHARLES?
NOOOO...
NNN... STOPPP...
CHARLES? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
NO. NOT REALLY.
STOP...
YOU DIDN'T HAPPEN TO SEE MY ARMOR?
NO.
TONY, YOUR HEART...
WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS?
YOU AREN'T GOING TO MAKE IT MUCH--
WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?
THAT WAY...

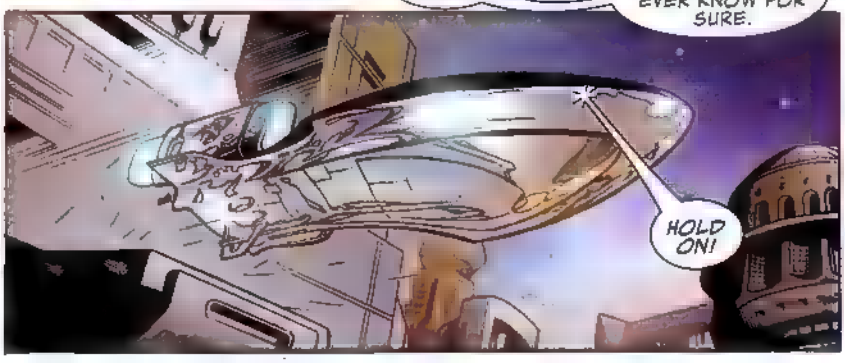
GUH!
I WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO HIT SOMETHING.
SCHOOM
BE MY GUEST.
NO.
THE ARMADA HAS BEEN CALLED. WE HAVE TO LEAVE.
HOW MANY SHIPS?
THE ARMADA. ALL OF THEM.
SCHOOM
THE EYE. WE CAN'T LEAVE THE EYE OF AGAMOTTO.
GO!
TONY!
ARGH!
WHAT IS WRONG WITH HIM?
IT'S HIS HEART. DOESN'T HAVE HIS ARMOR.
TONY! LOOK AT ME! LOOK AT MY EYES!
FRADANAZ TYLYU!
NOW LET'S GO.
WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME, DOCTOR?
JUST A LITTLE SOMETHING TO KEEP YOUR HEART PUMPING TILL WE GET HOME.
LET'S JUST GRAB RICHARDS AND GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE--
SCHOOM
SCHOOM
DON'T PUSH IT, TONY, IT'S ONLY...
OH MY GOD...


UH...

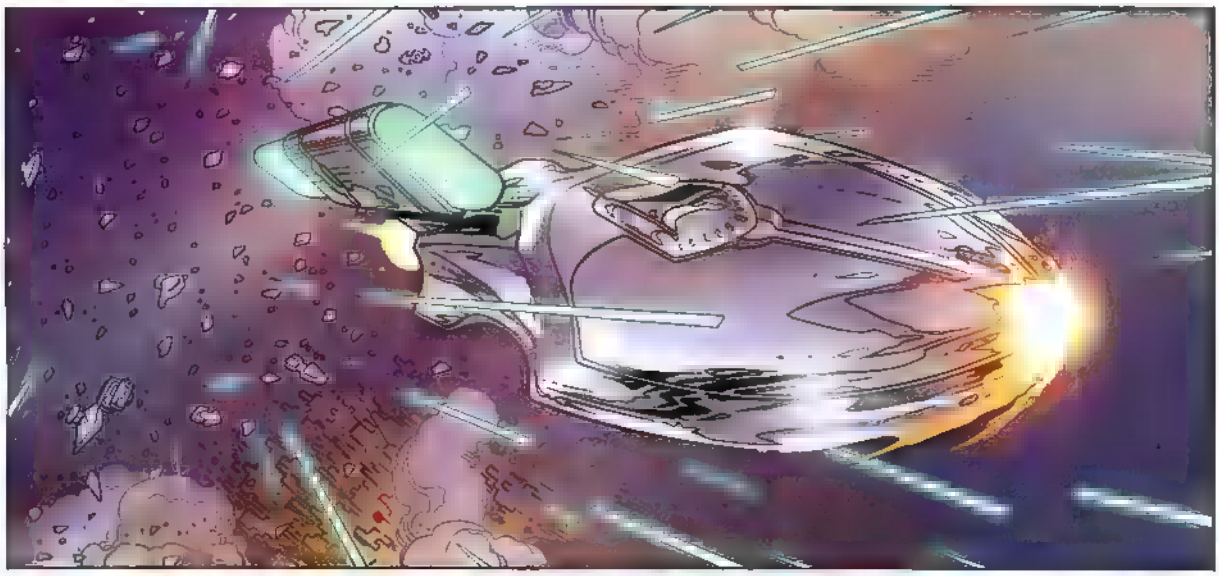
SCHOOM
MONSTERS!



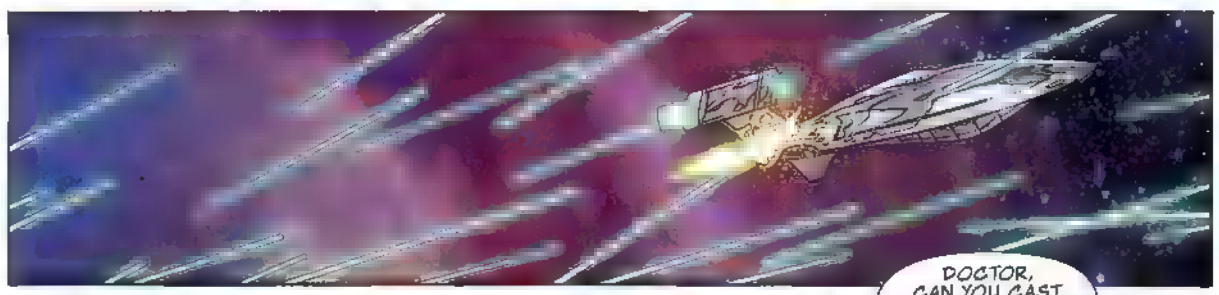
WHICH ONE DO WE TAKE?
THE BIG ONE.
IT'S A LONG WAY HOME.
CAN YOU FLY A SKRULL SHIP?
THERE'S REALLY ONLY ONE WAY I'LL EVER KNOW FOR SURE.

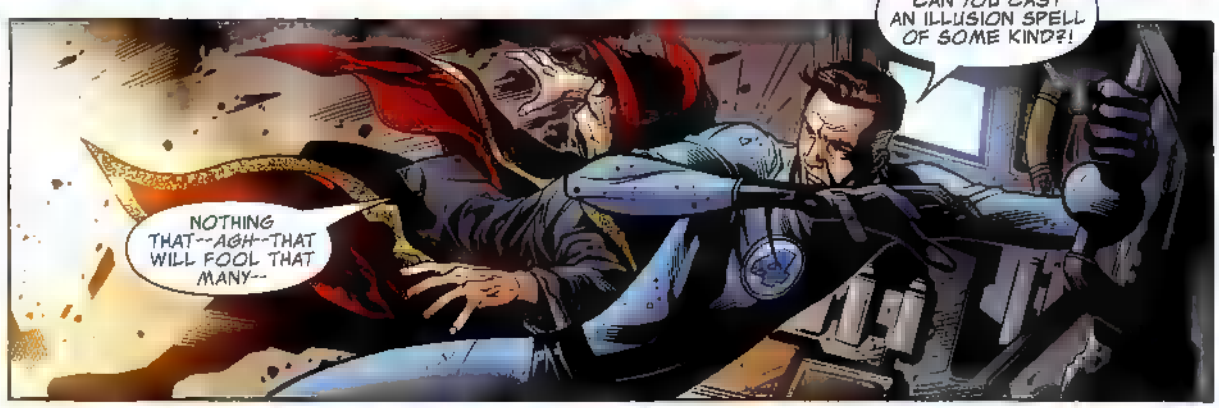

HOLD ON!

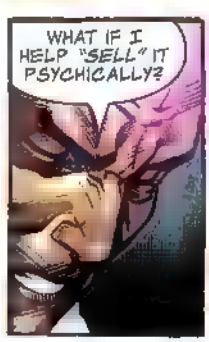
BY THE HOARY HOST OF...

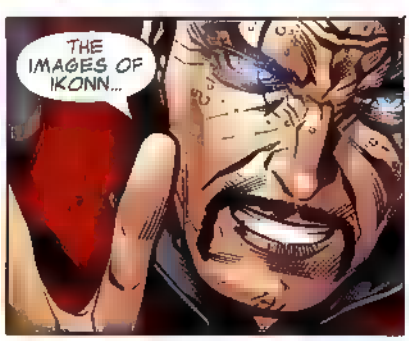


BLACK BOLT WANTS YOU TO OPEN THE BACK POD-BAY!
NO! WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF THE ATMOSPHERE!




DOCTOR, CAN YOU CAST AN ILLUSION SPELL OF SOME KIND?!
NOTHING THAT--AGH--THAT WILL FOOL THAT MANY--


WHAT IF I HELP "SELL" IT PSYCHICALLY?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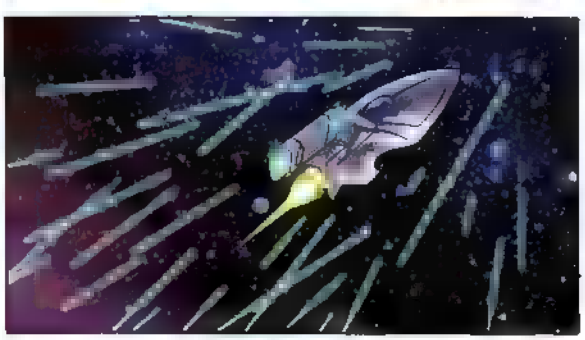


GALACTUS!
NOOO!

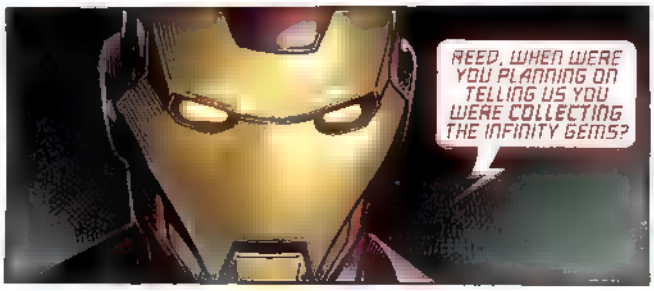
THEY WILL COME FOR US.
THEY WERE COMING FOR US ALREADY.
NAMOR IS RIGHT.
BUT, HEY, WE MADE IT CLEAR THAT IF THEY DO COME AT US, THE FIGHT WILL BE A REAL FIGHT.
MAYBE NOW THEY'LL LOOK FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO PICK ON.
WELL, AT LEAST NOW THEY KNOW IT'LL BE A GOOD FIGHT.

YOUR EXCELLENCE. THE DAMAGE REPORT IS...
STOP.
DID WE GET WHAT WE NEEDED FROM THEM?
YES, YOUR EXCELLENCE.
THEN IT WAS WORTH IT.
TELL THE PRIESTS OF THE SCIENCES TO GET TO WORK.
THEY KNOW WHAT TO DO.
TELL THEM NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TAKES--
I'LL WAIT.
NEXT ISSUE:
INFINITY GAUNTLET

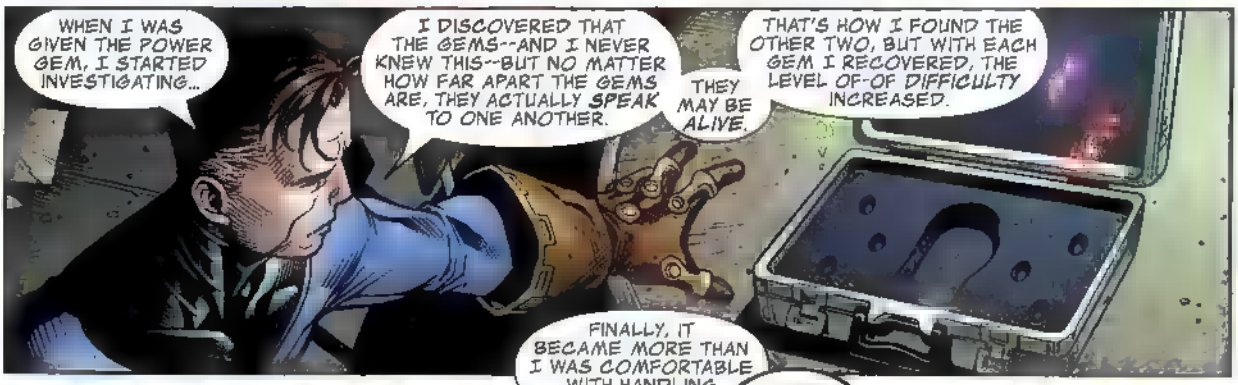
SEVERAL MONTHS AGO...
THIS...IS AN INFINITY GEM.
THERE ARE SIX GEMS ALTOGETHER.
EACH WIELDS COSMIC-LEVEL POWER OF A SPECIFIC TYPE.
WHEN BROUGHT TOGETHER, THEY GIVE THE PERSON WIELDING THAT POWER INFINITE CONTROL OVER SPACE, TIME AND MATTER...
...OVER THE ENTIRE KNOWN UNIVERSE.
THIS IS THE POWER GEM.
MR. FANTASTIC
LEADER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
BLACK BOLT
KING OF THE INHUMANS.
NAMOR
RULER OF ATLANTIS.
AND HOW IS IT, DOCTOR RICHARDS, THAT YOU HAVE ONE?
AND WHY THE HELL DID YOU BRING IT HERE?
TONY STARK,
THE INVINCIBLE
IRON MAN
DOCTOR
STRANGE
MASTER OF MYSTIC ARTS.
PROFESSOR
CHARLES XAVIER
LEADER OF THE UNCANNY X-MEN.

SHE-HULK TOOK IT FROM TITANIA. SHE THEN BROUGHT IT TO ME FOR SAFE-KEEPING.
ONE OF SHE-HULK'S BAD GUYS GOT THEIR HANDS ON AN INFINITY GEM?
AND IT GOT ME THINKING THAT--
ONE OF SHE-HULK'S?!
WELL, THAT JUST MAKES ME NAUSEOUS.
GET IT OUT OF HERE.
IT GOT ME THINKING THAT THERE ARE FIVE MORE OF THESE SCATTERED ABOUT THE UNIVERSE.
AND EVERY TIME THANOS OR ANYONE HAS QUESTED TO GATHER THEM TOGETHER, IT HAS ALWAYS--ALWAYS--BROUGHT THIS PLANET NOTHING BUT PAIN.
POWERS GREATER THAN OUR OWN USE THESE GEMS AND US AS BARGAINING CHIPS IN A POWER STRUGGLE THAT WE HAVE NO WAY OF FIGHTING AGAINST.
WE ARE ALIVE TODAY... BECAUSE OF DUMB LUCK.
BLACK BOLT SAYS HE WAS LED TO BELIEVE THE INFINITY GEMS COULD NO LONGER WORK TOGETHER IN UNISON.
AND I SAY TO HIM: SAYS WHO?
EXACTLY.
I WAS THERE WITH DOCTOR STRANGE DURING THANOS' LATEST STUNT WITH HIS INFINITY GAUNTLET.
AND I CAN TELL YOU-- THE DANGER OF THESE GEMS IS OH SO VERY REAL.
A DANGER THAT, I THINK, WE MUST CONTAIN BEFORE IT EVER HAPPENS AGAIN.
WHAT DO YOU PROPOSE WE DO?
I PROPOSE WE QUICKLY AND QUIETLY FIND ALL SIX OF THE INFINITY GEMS.

THE INFINITY GAUNTLET?!
YOU HAVE THE INFINITY GAUNTLET?
AND TWO MORE INFINITY GEMS?


REED, WHEN WERE YOU PLANNING ON TELLING US YOU WERE COLLECTING THE INFINITY GEMS?

UH, NOW.


WHEN I WAS GIVEN THE POWER GEM, I STARTED INVESTIGATING...
I DISCOVERED THAT THE GEMS--AND I NEVER KNEW THIS--BUT NO MATTER HOW FAR APART THE GEMS ARE, THEY ACTUALLY SPEAK TO ONE ANOTHER.
THEY MAY BE ALIVE.
THAT'S HOW I FOUND THE OTHER TWO, BUT WITH EACH GEM I RECOVERED, THE LEVEL OF-OF DIFFICULTY INCREASED.

FINALLY, IT BECAME MORE THAN I WAS COMFORTABLE WITH HANDLING ALONE AND I--
STOP! STOP IT!
YOU'RE JUST A HUMAN. JUST A MAN.
HOW DARE YOU EVEN ATTEMPT THIS?!

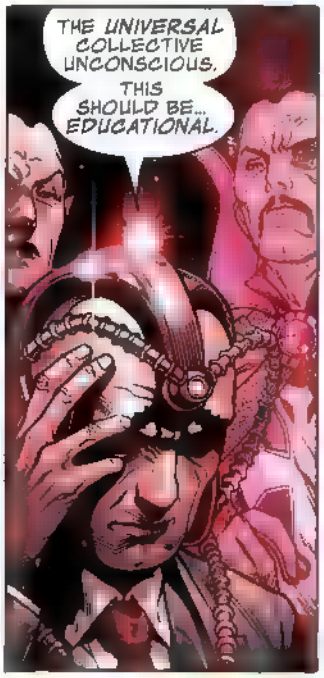
HOW DARE YOU RISK THE--
THE RISK IS NOT TRYING TO FIND THEM. THE RISK IS LETTING OTHERS--
EVEN IF SOMEONE MANAGES TO FIND AN INFINITY GEM, THEY ARE NEVER ABLE TO HOLD ONTO IT FOR VERY LONG.
THE ODDS AGAINST ANYONE MANAGING TO ASSEMBLE ALL SIX GEMS AGAIN--
IT HAS HAPPENED BEFORE.
YES!
TWICE WE HAVE FACED THAT VERY SITUATION AND TWICE WE HAVE DEFUSED IT.
THE LAST TIME THE GEMS WERE COLLECTED, I CEASED TO EXIST.
SO I'M SORRY IF I SEEM OVERLY CONCERNED.
IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE, LEAVE.
BUT THE IDEA BEHIND US GATHERING TOGETHER WAS TO ADDRESS SITUATIONS EXACTLY LIKE THIS.
NOW, BRACE YOURSELVES...
THIS ■ WHEN THINGS, AS MY BROTHER-IN-LAW LIKES TO SAY, GET "A LITTLE WEIRD."
REED? ARE YOU--
--OKAY?

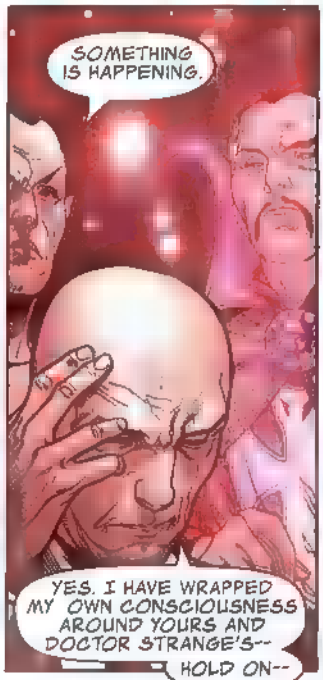
HOLY--
WHERE HAVE WE GONE?
WE HAVEN'T GONE ANYWHERE.
I ASKED THE GEMS TO SHOW US WHERE THE OTHERS ARE.
I BELIEVE THAT IS THE MIND GEM.
THIS IS CONJECTURE, BUT IT LOOKS AS IF IT HAS SLIPPED FROM THE UNIVERSE AS WE PERCEIVE IT AND HAS LODGED ITSELF INTO WHAT WE COULD ONLY REFER TO AS THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS.
THERE! THAT MUST BE THE REALITY GEM.
IT SEEMS TO SIT AT THE ACTUAL EDGE OF REALITY ITSELF.
AND THE TIME GEM, WELL, THAT'S EVEN A BIT TRICKIER.
HOW DO I SAY THIS ■ LAYMAN'S TERMS...IT SEEMS TO BE ADRIFT ■ TIME.
BUT I THINK, ONCE I GET CONTROL OF THE OTHER INFINITY GEMS, I CAN USE THEM TO REACH THE TIME GEM.
WE.
HMM?
YOU SAID "I" AND I THINK YOU MEANT "WE."
YES. OF COURSE.

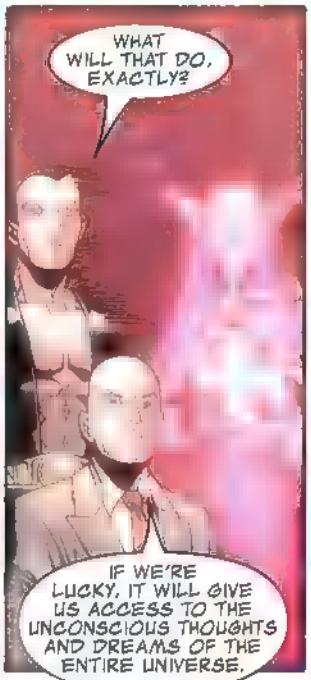
XAVIER'S ACADEMY FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS
HEADQUARTERS OF THE X-MEN.
I AM VERY UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THIS...
YOU'VE MADE THAT VERY CLEAR, NAMOR.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU NEED ME HERE FOR.

YOU'RE HERE FOR MORAL SUPPORT.
IS THAT MOCKERY?
IT'S SARCASM. YOU'RE MUSCLE, NAMOR. YOU'RE HERE IN CASE THINGS GET ROUGH.
I'M HERE BECAUSE RICHARDS DOESN'T WANT ME NEAR HIS LAB...OR HIS WIFE.
AND YOU SHOULD HONOR THAT.
STEPHEN?
READY, CHARLES.
READY WITH WHAT? WHAT ARE WE DOING?
DOCTOR STRANGE IS OUR ANCHOR.

HIS ASTRAL FORM, WHILE TIED TO MY PSYCHIC PROJECTIONS, CAN BRING US BACK TO THIS POINT--
FINE! DON'T OVEREXPLAIN IT. LET'S JUST DO THIS AND GET IT OVER WITH.


THE UNIVERSAL COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS.
THIS SHOULD BE... EDUCATIONAL.


SOMETHING IS HAPPENING.
YES. I HAVE WRAPPED MY OWN CONSCIOUSNESS AROUND YOURS AND DOCTOR STRANGE'S--
HOLD ON--


WHAT WILL THAT DO, EXACTLY?
IF WE'RE LUCKY, IT WILL GIVE US ACCESS TO THE UNCONSCIOUS THOUGHTS AND DREAMS OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE.

AND IF WE ARE UNLUCKY?
JUST...
CLEAR YOUR MIND...

GGKK!!
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
BY THE VISHANTI...
THIS IS IT...
THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE.
BUT...
THE MIND GEM IS NOT PART OF THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS AT ALL...
NO.
IT-IT IS THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS.

THE BAXTER BUILDING: HOME AND HEADQUARTERS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR
WE'RE ALMOST READY, BLACK BOLT.
JUST A MOMENT LONGER WHILE I DOUBLE-CHECK ALL THE EQUIPMENT.
AND YOU'RE SURE THIS ISN'T GOING TO BRING THE ENTIRE BUILDING DOWN?
PRETTY SURE.
I'M HAVING TROUBLE FIGURING THE CALCULATIONS ALL THE WAY THROUGH.
WELL, I'VE DONE MORE INTERDIMENSIONAL TRAVEL THAN YOU.
WE SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS AS A GROUP.
FINDING A GEM MAKES FINDING THE NEXT ONE CATEGORICALLY MORE DIFFICULT.
FINDING TWO AT THE SAME TIME, ELIMINATES THAT VARIABLE.
WHY AREN'T WE DOING THIS SOMEPLACE SAFER--LIKE THE MIDDLE OF THE OCEAN OR THE NEGATIVE ZONE?
IF REALITY FOLDS ON ITSELF, IT WON'T MATTER WHERE WE ARE.
I FEEL WE DO.
NOT "HA HA" FUNNY.
LISTEN, REED, WE DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS--
I'M JUST SAYING, IF THIS IS JUST BECAUSE--
I AM ABOUT TO DO SOMETHING HERE THAT I'VE ONLY EVER DONE ON PAPER.
LET'S FOCUS ON THE TASK.

BLACK BOLT... SPEAK.
ACTIVATING AMPLIFICATION DEVICES.
REED?
FOCUSING SOUND-WAVE ENERGIES.
REED?
YES...THE READINGS ARE RIGHT.
GOOD LORD, THE POWER OUTPUT IS INCREDIBLE...
BETTER THAN I HAD HOPED.
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE HOLDS IN THAT MUCH POWER.
WE'RE DOING IT, TONY.
WE'RE DOING IT!
IS IT JUST ME, OR IS THE WHOLE BUILDIN' SHAKIN'?
REED'S IN HIS LAB. OF COURSE THE BUILDING IS SHAKING.
IS THAT WHAT A HOLE IN REALITY IS SUPPOSED TO LOOK LIKE?
I IMAGINE IF WE LOOK THROUGH THAT WE COULD SEE THE VERY EDGE OF... WHAT IS.
"WHAT IS."
OF COURSE, WE'D PROBABLY GO COMPLETELY INSANE...
ARE YOUR ARMOR'S SENSORS PICKING ANYTHING UP?
UH...
ACTUALLY, YES, THEY ARE.
WHOA. IS THAT RIGHT?

AN OCEAN.
AN OCEAN MADE OF CRYSTAL?
SO WHAT DO YOU THINK, CHARLES?
NONE OF US EXPECTED THE MIND GEM TO BE SO...
ENCOMPASSING.
IT'S BEAUTIFUL.
I DO NOT THINK IT IS AS LARGE AS IT APPEARS.
IN FACT, I THINK IT IS EXACTLY AS ONE IMAGINES IT.
AHHH...I SEE YOUR LINE OF THINKING.
WE IMAGINED THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS AS A PHYSICAL PLACE--A DESTINATION.
AND SUCH THOUGHTS INVOKE, EVEN SUBCONSCIOUSLY, SIZE AND MASS.
EXACTLY. WE THOUGHT WE WERE GOING SOMEPLACE BIG--
AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHERE WE HAVE GONE.
SO IF PERCEPTION IS REALITY, THEN--
GENTLEMEN...
WHAT ON EARTH?
IT MOVES LIKE WATER, BUT...
THERE'S SOMETHING DOWN THERE.
NAMOR!
GET THE PROFESSOR TO SAFETY!
KRAK!
GHNN!

WELL... THAT WASN'T SO BAD.
WARNING! STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY FAILING!
KRRKK KRRK
OH NO.
TONY!
WARNING! WARRRRIIIIAAAAA!
STAY BACK. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPEN-- AAHHHHH!
RICHARDS!
I THOUGHT THE IRON MAN ARMOR WOULD PROTECT YOU FROM THE REALITY RIFT, BUT--
YOU HAVE TOOOAAGGHH SEND IT BACK!
OH NO. IT'S THE GEM.
A-REE-AEEEEEEED!! TEEELLL HEEELP-P-P--

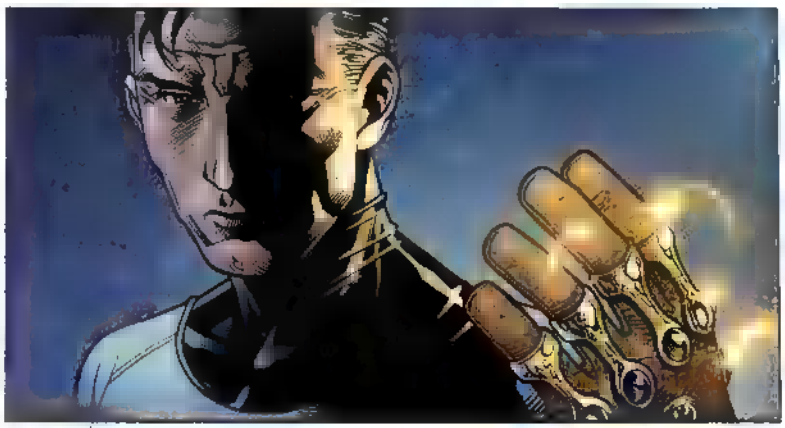
NAMOR! STOP!
YOU SAID THAT IN THIS PLACE PERCEPTION IS REALITY!
THEN THIS PART MAY [redacted] MY FAULT.
KAGHOMP!
NOOOO!

BLACK BOLT! GET OUT OF HERE! THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO!!
YOU'RE RIGHT!
GET OUT OF HERE! GET MY FAMILY OUT OF THIS BUILDING!
I CAN'T LET THIS BE HOW IT ENDS!
PLEASE...

AARRGGHH!
DANTI TURUNANTI SPILIN!!!
FAWHAM

PLEASE WORK...
SHOULD WE GO UP THERE?

GUH...
GNUH...



WELL...
LET'S HOPE THE OTHERS ARE HAVING A BETTER TIME.

I HOPE THIS...IS AN INFINITY GEM.
THE MIND GEM...
REED?
AMAZING.
VERY NICE.
UH.
MY SENSORS ARE REALLY HITTING OVERLOAD!
WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?
I DON'T--
TAKE OFF THE GLOVE.
NOW.

IS THAT THE--?
THE TIME GEM.
THE FIVE GEMS TOGETHER JUST... SUMMONED THE LAST ONE.
OKAY, I'M ABOUT DONE WITH THIS.
THE GAUNTLET... BROUGHT IT HOME.
TAKE IT OFF NOW.
REED?
REED, TAKE OFF THE GLOVE.
RICHARDS, I WILL TAKE IT FROM YOU WITH MY DYING BREATH IF YOU DON'T--
OH MY--

REED RICHARDS...I EXPECTED MORE FROM YOU.
THE WATCHER!
UATU...
MY JOB IS TO WATCH AND RECORD THE UNIVERSE'S DEFINING EVENTS.
AND NOW I FIND MYSELF HERE, WATCHING THIS.
I HAVE BROKEN THE CODE OF MY EXISTENCE COUNTLESS TIMES FOR YOU.
BECAUSE I BELIEVED IN YOU.
I BELIEVED, GIVEN A CHANCE, THAT YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE CAN ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING.
AND THIS IS WHAT YOU DO?
REED, TAKE IT OFF.
MAN WAS NOT MEANT TO WIELD THIS KIND OF POWER.
IT'S BEYOND YOUR UNDERSTANDING.
YOU WILL DESTROY EVERYTHING.

IT DIDN'T WORK.
WHAT DIDN'T WORK?
I THOUGHT I COULD WILL THE GAUNTLET TO CEASE TO EXIST.
IT DIDN'T WORK.
IT WON'T LET ME.
TAKE IT.
I CANNOT.
YOU WELL KNOW THAT.
PLEASE...
I CANNOT. AND NEITHER CAN YOU.
NO ONE BEING OF ANY KIND IN THIS UNIVERSE... SHOULD POSSESS ALL OF THE GEMS.
I AGREE.
ESPECIALLY A HUMAN.
I AGREE.

BECAUSE I ALSO BELIEVE...
...THAT GIVEN A CHANCE...
...THAT WE...
...CAN ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING.
GIVEN THE CHANCE.

EACH ONE OF US WILL HAVE A GEM. AND NEVER *EVER* SHALL WE USE THEM.
YOU WILL HIDE THEM FROM EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE.
WE WILL BE THEIR PROTECTORS.
NONE OF US WILL KNOW WHERE THE OTHERS HAVE HIDDEN THEM.
IT IS THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP THEM SAFE.

THIS WAS NOT YOUR DECISION TO MAKE, RICHARDS.
I FEAR WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOU ONCE YOU'VE BEEN DISCOVERED.
BUT I *AM* PROFOUNDLY GRATEFUL YOU WERE *STRONG* ENOUGH OF MIND TO NOT GIVE IN TO THE GAUNTLET'S TEMPTATIONS.

NEXT: SECRET WARS!

THE NEW AVENGERS
ILLUMINATI #3
ON SALE IN MAY
MORALES · JP. · X·MMVI